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FROM AIT KAOHSIUNG BRANCH OFFICE

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SUBJECT: Great Southern Expectations for KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou

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11. Summary (SBU): Although Speaker of the Legislative Yuan Wang Jin-pyng's main constituency is in Kaohsiung County, Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou, much to the surprise of most KMT supporters, defeated Wang Jin-pyng in the KMT Chairman election in Southern Taiwan. Voters here, putting a new premium on "clean government," expressed a hope that the KMT can reform and that scandals in Taiwan can begin to fade rather than to continuously erupt.
End Summary.

12. (SBU) Elected KMT officials in Kaohsiung County and their supporters have told AIT/K that Ma Ying-jeou's victory in the KMT Chairman election is proof that people expect clean politics and hope that the KMT will reform. Ma was elected despite the fact he had no substantial access to grass root members of the party, particularly in southern Taiwan, to campaign for him and despite lacking the central party organization support possessed by Wang Jin-pyng. On the other hand, Wang Jin-pyng's loss may just be attributed to his long political career, which began in 1975, and his broader connections in the Party that link him inevitably to "black-gold" and the "old-KMT."

13. (U) The following is the voting rate in southern cities/counties, which Ma won by a surprising margin:

Kaohsiung City:	Ma - 75.28%	Wang - 23.30%
Chiayi County:	Ma - 59.81%	Wang - 38.77%
Chiayi City:	Ma - 74.10%	Wang - 25.07%
Tainan County:	Ma - 60.19%	Wang - 38.43%
Tainan City:	Ma - 76.15%	Wang - 22.75%
Kaohsiung County:	Ma - 54.17%	Wang - 44.90%
Pingtung County:	Ma - 63.85%	Wang - 35.12%
Penghu County:	Ma - 66.65%	Wang - 31.96%
Taitung County:	Ma - 76.06%	Wang - 22.94%

14. (U) Ma's election by such broad margins, according to local KMT sources, reflects the public's disappointment in the recent cases of corruption that have surfaced in President Chen's administration. There is a sense in the south among Wang Jin-pyng supporters that Ma, although his "clean image" makes him unsuitable to actually run the KMT's assets, makes him the "great hope" for the KMT to reform the party and retake the presidency. This island-wide desire for "clean government," personified by Ma Ying-jeou, may be the force that can sweep Ma to the presidency and other KMT politicians into local positions. Wang supporters in the south, while agreeing Wang would still be a better and more savvy KMT leader, voted for Ma because of the party's current "need" for a fighting chance against the DPP. Rather than the vote for Ma signaling a lack of support for Wang, it actually heralded a move to place ideas above personalities.

15. (SBU) KMT sources stated repeatedly that in order to prove to people that the KMT will reform and will bring a better, cleaner political environment, Ma's main task is now to nominate candidates who are free from allegations of corruption and who present a fresh vision for the future of the party. While KMT sources offered no particular names of candidates who might fit that description, they did note that only after the results of future elections -- the first of which will be the December 3 mayoral/magistrate elections -- will Ma determine whether the people approve of his performance as Chairman of the KMT. His personal campaign efforts for Southern KMT candidates in future elections will be a test to see how far south his immaculate coattails really extend.

16. (SBU) During AIT/K's visits to local DPP offices in the 2004 presidential election, some of the DPP local chairmen in Southern Taiwan stated that the local DPP would have had far more difficulty campaigning for President Chen if Ma were the KMT presidential candidate.

¶7. (SBU) A DPP Kaohsiung party official admitted to AIT/K on September 6, 2005, that they have received numerous complaints from their supporters. Supporters have accused the DPP administration of being as corrupt as the previous KMT administration and have characterized DPP politicians as being connected with "black-gold". This DPP official criticized DPP politicians and officials, stating that some of them "forget their ideals after gaining power and position". He expressed disappointment in politics, but stated, "We cannot live without politics."

¶8. (SBU) Comment. Ma's surprisingly strong showing indicates that he, or the ideal he represents, has more of an island-wide appeal than most people, perhaps including himself, had realized. Oddly enough, the DPP seems to have realized that what Ma represents and the cleanliness attributed to Ma by the people is far more dangerous than the man himself. DPP Chairman Su Tseng-chang, on a trip to boost local candidates in I-lan county, recently stated "We [DPP] will win if we have good performance in local areas. So our biggest enemy is ourselves, not Ma Ying-jeou." End comment.

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